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SUBJECT: HAZARAS DIVIDED BY KARZAI, UNITED FRONT POLITICS

¶11. (SBU) Summary: The once united Hazara ethnic group has politically splintered since the fall of the Taliban; its fragments are being divided between Karzai and the opposition United Front. Powerful Hazara leaders' connections to Iran, or lack thereof, sometimes dictate their affiliation with Karzai or the reportedly Iran-connected United Front. Smaller groups, meanwhile, calculate their allegiance based on their perceptions of the balance of power in Kabul. Some Hazara leaders have begun to complain their ethnic group is no longer sufficiently represented in Karzai's government. Like some other ethnic groups, they claim Karzai's coalition government has lost its former regard for representative ethnic balance.

One Politically Fractured Ethnic Group

¶12. (SBU) The Hazara ethnic group, once fairly united by adversity under the Wahdat and Harakat parties, is politically divided and ripe for recruitment into the coalitions coalescing around Karzai or the opposition United Front. After the fall of the Taliban, the Hazaras' brutal recent antagonist, many Hazara leaders broke from their dominant power structures. The spine of Hazara politics, Wahdat, split into four branches, one under the leadership of Vice President Mohammad Karim Khalili, and three respectively under the leadership of National Assembly members: Haji Mohammad Mohaqeq, Ustad Mohammad Akbari, and Sayed Mustafa Kazimi.

¶13. (SBU) The other Shia party that had attracted Hazara membership, Harakat-e-Islami-e-Afghanistan, divided similarly. Harakat's founder, the Kandahari Shia Pashtun Ayatollah Muhammad Asif Mohseni, retired from politics in 2005 to devote himself to his charitable foundation, and his deputies, Hojatolislam Seyyed Muhammad Ali Jawed and Herat Governor Sayed Hussein Anwari, divided the party between them. Harakat director of international relations Murtaza Negzad later broke from Jawed and Anwari, forming a third branch of Harakat.

¶14. (SBU) Up and coming Hazara leaders, meanwhile, further divided the Hazara political block, presenting the Hazara political community with additional options. National Assembly member Fatema Nazari formed a new women's group to

lobby for Hazara issues in Kabul. A young Hazara named Sayed Jawad Hossaini also formed a new group, the Young Islamic Party of Afghanistan, which is primarily Hazara, but reaching out to all religions and ethnicities.

Hazara Parties - Iranian Birth, Afghan Wars

¶15. (SBU) Eight Hazara political parties were born in Iran during the anti-Soviet jihad. Known as the "Tehran Eight", these groups and their Iranian-backed militias formed the nucleus of all subsequent Hazara politics. Through the course of the jihad, mujahadeen civil war, and vicious fight against the Taliban, Harakat and Wahdat came to dominate Hazara politics. Over time, some Hazara leaders chose to break with Iran, while some stayed close. These legacy relationships now help define political allegiances among Hazara leaders and Hazara relationships with external groups.

Hazaras Divided in Karzai-United Front Struggle

¶16. (SBU) Kabul's political giants, Karzai and the United Front, are courting the new Hazara parties and groups. Those powerful Hazara leaders with connections to Iran have proved generally more sympathetic to the United Front, which is rumored to depend partially on Iranian funding. Smaller parties and splinters have coldly calculated their allegiance based on the benefits they perceive from allying with one side or the other.

¶17. (SBU) According to Wahdat International Relations director Abdul Ali Azad, National Assembly members Akbari and Kazimi

KABUL 00000667 002 OF 002

quickly aligned themselves with the United Front because of their shared Iranian connections. Azad adds this caused Mohaqeq and Khalili, who are not as connected to Iran, to overcome their differences and explore entry into Karzai's political orbit. According to Harakat leader Negzad, Harakat is similarly divided between Karzai and the United Front. Jawed, who is religious, close to Iran, and has a personal relationship with Lower House Speaker and United Front leader Mohammad Yonus Qanooni, held a series of meetings and publicly announced that Harakat would side with the United Front. Anwari, who is more secular and not connected to Iran, resisted, dividing the party between him and Jawed.

¶18. (SBU) Among smaller party leaders considering with whom to align themselves, Iranian connections seem less a determining factor than crude political power calculations. Young Islamic Party of Afghanistan leader Hossaini, who announced his allegiance to the United Front at a recent press conference, said the prospect of a stronger political voice caused him to align with the United Front. He added he made the decision despite not agreeing with many United Front positions. Negzad, meanwhile, said separately he supported Karzai in the last election but would likely seek another patron, the United Front, because Karzai promised Negzad a deputy minister position but never delivered.

Internal Divisions Weaken Perceived Hazara Influence

¶19. (SBU) While the best known Hazara leaders maintain their power and authority, weaker Hazara politicians complain the ethnic group as a whole is losing ground in the government, which may be a symptom of their current political division. Harakat leader Negzad complained that Hazaras are increasingly left out of Karzai's administration. He said while the better known Hazara personalities, such as Mohaqeq, Khalili, and Anwari, maintain their positions, Hazaras in the ministries have increasingly lost their jobs to Tajiks and Pashtuns. He claimed Hazaras now represent less than four percent of the government workforce, too low a percentage for an ethnic group he said comprises 20 - 30

percent of Afghanistan's population. (Note: We believe the Hazaras represent less than ten percent of Afghanistan's population. End Note) While Negzad exaggerates declining Hazara influence as well as the size of Afghanistan's Hazara population, the fracturing of the Hazara block has likely contributed to some decline in Hazara participation in the government. This perception that they are losing influence is a partial impetus for Hazara leaders' increased outreach to larger patrons as they seek to secure political influence.

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